

9 MARCH 1976

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## Henry's leaked secrets

The documents were emblazoned Top Secret-Sensitive-Nodis-Cherokee, as befits current records of the most confidential Mid-east negotiations with foreign chiefs of state.

No documents of such immediate sensitivity have ever been leaked before, because such disclosure would compromise a President's ability to talk privately and frankly with his counterparts abroad.

But six months ago, Henry Kissinger was getting less praise than he thought he deserved at the conclusion of his shuttle diplomacy. Therefore, a respected pro-Arab research fellow at Harvard was slipped selected portions of transcripts of secret discussions that showed Kissinger to be, in the phrase the writer chose, "at the apogee of his genius."

The result is the journalistic coup in this month's *Foreign Policy* magazine. Writer Edward Sheehan and editors Warren Manshel and Richard Holbrooke deserve high marks for enterprise. Nobody should ask them anything about their sources.

But some questions arise for officials of the United States government. Who leaked these private discussion transcripts? What damage has it done? What can be done to set it right?

Anybody who accepts the notion that these documents could have been leaked without the permission of Kissinger is living in a dream world.

The irony is that the leak was set in motion six months ago, and breaks into print just after Kissinger has exploded at the Congress for leaking the Pike report that criticised him. Henry's blistering attack

panicked the Congress into turning an ethics committee into a plumbers committee to track down those responsible for leaking a non-secret criticism.

The criterion of classification has become intensely personal: What is embarrassing to Kissinger is "top secret," and the leak must be plugged at all costs; but what makes the secretary of state appear to be "at the apogee of his genius" — no matter how secret — can be leaked with impunity.

The long-range diplomatic damage is considerable. Never mind that the quotations out of context make Golda Meir look bellicose and the Arab leaders shrewd; that twisting of the record pales beside this central fact: *No foreign leader can now talk with the President of the United States or his secretary of state confident that the privacy of those discussions will be respected.*

What can Ford and the Congress do to repair the damage — to make possible frank, private discussions in the future?

The standard "thunder-struck" disavowals by Kissinger will no longer suffice; that figleaf won't hide.

All the congressmen who trembled at Kissinger's thunder a couple of weeks ago, and who guiltily voted for a self-investigation by the House ethics committee, have just been slapped in the face with a large, wet fish.

The head of the House plumbers, "our man Flynt," cannot ignore this outrage. Since the minor Pike leak and the massive Kissinger leak are closely related in time and subject

matter, he should demand that the secretary of state march up to the Hill to answer some questions. What did he know and when did he know it? Which aide has been elected Fall Guy? Did the President know about this when he ostentatiously offered the House help in plugging their leaks?

The secretary might just have to come clean, because he knows all his aides, spokesmen and secretaries will have to testify, and few loyal aides are going to risk prison on perjury charges just to protect Henry.

Perhaps the Congress needed this ultimate insult to steer it away from some terrible constitutional abuses. The inside Ellsbergs are the villains, not the outside Schorrs; the leaker, not the leaked-to, is the betrayer of confidence.

If Ford, a man of the House, expects the House to restore respect for the nation's legitimate secrets, then he should tell Chairman John Flynt that he will not claim executive privilege in the investigation of the making of top-secret "memcons" into publicity handouts. What is sauce for Pike's goose is sauce for Kissinger's gander; the President — who cannot object to congressional leaks if he will not object to leaks by his secretary of state — owes the House an apology.

Kissinger's fury at leakers caused the illegal wiretaps in 1969, caused the Pentagon Papers reaction leading to a break-in at a psychiatrist's office in 1971 and caused the House to start its own plumbers' unit in 1976. It is only fitting that the identical indignation now be turned against him in this most serious leak of all.